

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION**  
**RQ-1L "PREDATOR," S/N 96-3024**  
**NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, NEVADA**  
**17 SEPTEMBER 2002**

On 17 September 2002, at approximately 1142 (Zulu), a Predator aircraft, S/N 96-3024, crashed in Southwest Asia. The Predator, assigned to the 11<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Squadron, 57<sup>th</sup> Wing, Nellis AFB, Nevada, was performing a reconnaissance mission in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. The aircraft was remotely piloted and there were no fatalities or property damage. Personnel recovering the wreckage reported a building near the crash site with no apparent damage from the incident.

Shortly before impact, the aircraft entered an area of meteorological convective activity. The satellite data link with the aircraft was lost for approximately 20 seconds. The link was then re-established for nearly a minute, but by this point, the aircraft was unresponsive to pilot commands. The data link was lost a second time, re-established momentarily, and then permanently lost.

The primary cause of the mishap was the aircraft being unintentionally flown into a hazardous cloud.

*Under 10 U.S.C. 2254(d), any opinion of the accident investigators as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report may not be considered as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding arising from an aircraft accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability by the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements.*